

## Introduction - Migration: policies, practices, activism

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**Introduction**  
**Migration: Policies, Practices, Activism**

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**Introduction**

**Migration: Policies, Practices, Activism**

In their influential overview of the field of migration Stephen Castles and Mark Miller make the bold claim that: ‘International migration is part of a transnational revolution that is reshaping societies and politics around the globe’ (Castles and Miller, 2003). This statement may have seemed somewhat overblown when first made but the relevance of understanding the impact of changing patterns of international migration has become ever more clear over the past decade. In line with the spirit of this objective, we have pulled together a diverse range of papers for this themed issue on *Migration*. Though all the papers included in this issue were written independently, they speak to some common conceptual and empirical concerns. Without assuming that the various authors in this themed issue are speaking with the same voice, we want to take the opportunity offered to make some introductory comments that may help to bring out some common themes.

The past three decades have seen a radical transformation of the academic study of international migration in all its facets. Major programmes of research on international migration have been funded in a number of European countries and in North America, as well as other parts of the globe. In addition we have seen a steady flow of academic monographs, general books and journals that have focused on the changing dynamics and flows of migration across various parts of the globe. As a leading scholarly journal that covers race and ethnicity as well as migration we have played a role in the development

of this field of scholarship. Over the past decade and more, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* has been able to publish much of the most influential and cutting edge research in this field, both in the form of regular articles and in special issues. The latest of our special issues in this field was edited by Steven Vertovec on *New Directions in the Anthropology of Migration and Multiculturalism* (Volume 30, Issue 6, 2007). It brought together the work of leading scholars working at the interface between migration and migration studies, a theme that remains at the heart of contemporary political debates in various parts of the globe. We have also published a growing number of stand-alone articles that have addressed aspects of the changing morphology of migration in the current globalised environment. Transnational migration is one subject we have regularly featured.

This expansion of scholarship and research on migration is not an accident. It is closely linked to current political and policy preoccupations about a range of questions, including new patterns of migration flows, asylum and refuge, multiculturalism, religious and cultural diversity, identity formation among migrant communities and the impact of migration on economic and social development, migration and work, inter-ethnic relations, generational change among migrant communities and the governance of migration. Political and social debate about these, and other, questions has been an important factor in shaping both the scope of research and some of the specific preoccupations of academic research. For example, an important consequence of the terror attacks of 9/11 in the US and of 7/7 in the UK has been a growth of scholarship on issues of religious and cultural diversity, migration and security, and forms of transnational mobilisation. A key concern in some recent discussions has been on the

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question of whether policies promoting multiculturalism have somehow reduced a sense of national identity and social cohesion (Calhoun et al., 2002).

In this themed issue of *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, which is the first of a number of themed issues we shall be publishing during 2009 and 2010, we have pulled together a number of papers that have been accepted in the normal course of events but which are connected by some common concerns. The individual papers are spread over a wide range of empirical examples and conceptual frameworks; although it is not our intention in putting together a themed issue to assume that all authors are addressing a related set of objectives. The first paper by Alejandro Portes, reproduces his 2008 Ethnic and Racial Studies Annual Lecture delivered in London. He takes up a recurrent theme in the literature on migration, namely the interrelationship between migration and development. This is a particularly vexed issue in the literature on Latin America. Portes provides a clinical dissection of the empirical evidence on this issue, as well as drawing out some of the wider implications for the wider study of migration and development. In doing so Portes argues forcefully for the need to look at migration as a phenomenon that is interlinked to, and in turn shapes, global economic and social transformations.

The following two papers explore more specific dimensions of contemporary trends in European societies. Alison Bowes and her colleagues take up the question of the impact of asylum policies on asylum seekers in Scotland. The question of asylum and popular responses to it has been a hugely controversial issue in the UK over the past decade and the authors of this paper are able to show that questions of asylum need to be seen within particular regional and local experiences of settlement and interaction between communities. This is followed by a paper by Xavier Escandell and Alin Ceobanu

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3 focused on attitudes towards migrants in Spain. The experience of Spain, along with  
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5 other south European countries, has attracted much attention in recent years. This is  
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7 partly because these are countries where migration is seen as a relatively new  
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9 phenomenon. As Escandell and Ceobanu forcefully argue, however, the experiences of  
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11 the past decade and more have placed questions about migration and the position of  
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13 ethnic minorities very much on the social and political agenda of Spanish politics and  
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15 society.  
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20 The paper by Andrew Kim provides an insight into the impact of migration in South  
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22 Korea. Relatively little research has been done in countries such as South Korea about  
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24 migration as a social and cultural issue, although as Kim seeks to show there are reasons  
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26 to believe that global migration trends are likely to have a major impact on counties that  
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28 have been seen as largely monocultural. Indeed, Kim's critical analysis helpfully seeks  
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30 to situate the terms of discussion about migration in South Korea and is very much linked  
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32 to the terms of discourse that we have seen in North America and elsewhere.  
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37 An important issue in current scholarly debates about migration is the role of migrants  
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39 themselves as social actors. Anna Triandafyllidou's paper takes up this dimension and  
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41 explores it in relation to the mobilisations of sub-saharan immigrant activists.  
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43 Triandafyllidou's account highlights the need to look beyond the image of migrants as  
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45 vulnerable victims and to analyse their role as actors who seek to shape their own social  
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47 and political environment. Drawing on original research among sub-saharan migrants in  
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49 a number of European countries, her account provides a forceful reminder of the need to  
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51 see migrant activism within a broader social and cultural framework.  
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Following on from the issue of immigrant activism and forms of mobilisation the next two papers by Hermann Kurthen and Barbara Schmitter and Russell King and Nicola Mai provide insights into patterns of migrant incorporation. Kurthen and Schmitter revisit evidence about integration from the US and Germany and seek to highlight both the similarities and differences between the two situations. King and Mai’s analysis focuses on the specific example of Albanians in Italy, and seeks to show that there is no necessary symmetry in the ways in which migrant communities are accommodated or excluded within particular national settings. Indeed, they go on to suggest that there are often messy patterns of inclusion and exclusion operating at the same time.

The final paper in this issue is a discussion article by Thomas Faist on the interplay between growing forms of diversity and modes of incorporation. Addressing issues that relate to current trends in both Europe and North America, he addresses the need for greater theoretical precision as well as empirical detail if we are to understand the interplay between diversity and incorporation of minorities in contemporary societies. Drawing on the proliferation of recent discussion of this issue Faist’s account is framed by the need to situate debates about diversity against a comparative analytical frame that allows us to understand the complex social, economic and cultural processes that shape the experience of different societies.

We envisage that as processes of migration and movement across the globe become ever more complex, this journal will continue to provide a forum for publishing the latest research in this field from scholars working in all parts of the globe. We offer this themed issue as a contribution to contemporary scholarly and public debate.

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